

Message Text

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ACTION H-03

INFO OCT-01 EUR-08 NEA-07 ISO-00 SS-07 NSC-06 AID-01
/033 W

-----084816 222031Z /53

R 211500Z NOV 77
FM AMEMBASSY BUCHAREST
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6645
INFO AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

C O N F I D E N T I A L BUCHAREST 8511

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: CVIS, RO, IS, US, SHUM
SUBJECT: CODEL SOLARZ DISCUSSIONS ON JEWISH COMMUNITY,
EMIGRATION AND MFN

REF: BUCHAREST 8485

1. SUMMARY: DURING NOVEMBER 14-16 DISCUSSIONS WITH ISRAELI AMBASSADOR, JEWISH COMMUNITY LEADERS AND MEMBERS OF ROMANIAN OFFICIALS, CONGRESSMAN SOLARZ HEARD FULL SPECTRUM OF VIEWS ON SIZE OF COMMUNITY (22,000-45,000) AND OF EMIGRATION POOL (A HANDFUL TO 40-50,000), AND SEEMED IMPRESSED WITH VITALITY OF JEWISH CULTURAL AND COMMUNAL LIFE HE SAW HERE. IN RESPONSE TO ROMANIAN OFFICIALS URGING LONG MFN REVIEW PERIOD, HE SPOKE AS FRIEND OF ROMANIA CONVINCED LONGER PERIOD IS FEASIBLE, BUT NOT WITHOUT MODEST INCREASE IN JEWISH EMIGRATION FIGURES, AND URGED THEM TO ENCOURAGE WHATEVER (ADMITTEDLY PARTIAL) STEPS ARE WITHIN GOR'S POWER TO BRING IT ABOUT. SOLARZ DID NOT SPECIFY SIZE OF INCREASE HE HAD IN MIND, AND ALTHOUGH PRESENTATION SEEMED TO MAKE IMPRESSION ON ROMANIANS, THEY GAVE NO HINTS AS TO WHAT IF ANY INCREASE MIGHT BE POSSIBLE. END SUMMARY.

2. AS INDICATED REFTTEL, CONGRESSMAN SOLARZ SPENT GOOD DEAL OF HIS NOVEMBER 14-16 VISIT TO ROMANIA DISCUSSING STATUS AND PROSPECTS OF ROMANIA'S JEWISH COMMUNITY, AND WAS QUERIED BY SENIOR
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ROMANIAN OFFICIALS HE MET ON PROSPECTS FOR A LONGER MFN REVIEW PERIOD, GIVEN OVERALL STATE OF U.S.-ROMANIAN RELATIONS.

3. CODEL HEARD ALMOST FULL SPECTRUM OF OPINION ON SIZE AND STATUS OF COMMUNITY AND VARIETIES OF INTENTION CONCERNING EMIGRATION. ALL HIS INTERLOCUTORS AGREED IT IS HARD TO DEFINE SIZE OF COMMUNITY WITH ANY PRECISION, BUT JEWISH COMMUNITY LEADERS

(FEDERATION OF JEWISH COMMUNITIES SECRETARY-GENERAL EMIL SECHTER AND IASI COMMUNITY HEAD SIMON KAUFMAN) AND ISRAELI AMBASSADOR CAHANA AGREED THERE ARE ABOUT 40-45,000, BASED ON COMMUNITY'S STATISTICS OF SELF-DECLARING JEWS, WHILE ROMANIAN OFFICIALS STUCK TO LATEST CENSUS FIGURES OF 22-25,000 BUT ADMITTED MORE MIGHT COME FORWARD IN CERTAIN CIRCUMSTANCES. CODEL ALSO HEARD RANGE OF VIEWS ON SIZE OF POTENTIAL EMIGRANT POOL, RUNNING FROM A FEW YOUNG PEOPLE (ROMANIAN OFFICIALS) THROUGH MOST YOUNG PEOPLE, ONCE THEY HAVE COMPLETED THEIR EDUCATION, AND SOME OF THEIR ELDERS (JEWISH COMMUNITY OFFICIALS AND MOST OF YOUNG PEOPLE WITH WHOM CONGRESSMAN SPOKE IN BOTH BUCHAREST AND IASI) TO AS MANY AS HALF OF 70-100,000 SELF-DECLARED AND ASSIMILATED JEWS STILL IN THE COUNTRY (AMBASSADOR CAHANA).

4. BY THE END OF HIS STAY, CONGRESSMAN HIMSELF APPEARED IN CONVERSATIONS WITH DCM TO COME DOWN SOMEWHERE IN THE MIDDLE OF THESE RANGES, AND TO FEEL THAT WHILE THERE ARE OBVIOUS BIOLOGICAL LIMITS TO ROMANIA'S EMIGRATION POOL AFTER DEPARTURE OF MOST OF COMMUNITY, AND THAT INDIVIDUAL CHOICE HAS A GOOD DEAL TO DO WITH THE PACE OF EMIGRATION APPLICATIONS (MOST STUDENTS WANT TO FINISH THEIR FREE EDUCATION HERE, FOR INSTANCE), THERE ARE STILL FORMAL AND INFORMAL INHIBITIONS ON EMIGRATION WHICH IT IS WITHIN POWER OF GOR TO REMOVE. ON THE OTHER HAND, HE ALSO APPEARED TO BE IMPRESSED WITH VITALITY OF JEWISH CULTURAL AND COMMUNITY LIFE HE SAW HERE, IN BUCHAREST'S RITUAL RESTAURANT AND IN REHEARSAL OF IASI COMMUNITY'S YOUNG PEOPLE'S CHOIR WHICH HE ATTENDED (HE WOULD LIKE TO BRING CHOIR TO
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U.S.).

5. BOTH ELEMENTS WERE REFLECTED IN HIS TALKS WITH ROMANIAN OFFICIALS URGING LONGER REVIEW PERIOD FOR MFN. THUS, IN HIS NOVEMBER 16 DISCUSSIONS WITH GRAND NATIONAL ASSEMBLY PRESIDENT GIOSAN AND MFA DIRECTORATE I CHIEF ION CIUBOTARU, HE TOOK FOLLOWING LINE:

--HE IS A FRIEND OF ROMANIA, PERSONALLY CONVINCED THAT LONGER REVIEW PERIOD WOULD BE IN INTEREST OF BOTH COUNTRIES;

--THERE ARE OTHERS IN CONGRESS LIKE HIM;

--HE BELIEVES LEGISLATION PROVIDING FOR LONGER REVIEW PERIOD IS POSSIBLE;

--NEVERTHELESS, IT IS A POLITICAL REALITY THAT NO LONGER REVIEW PERIOD WILL BE POSSIBLE SO LONG AS THE FIGURES ON JEWISH EMIGRATION FROM ROMANIA, ESPECIALLY TO ISRAEL, ARE DECLINING;

--HE RECOGNIZES THAT THERE ARE MANY FACTORS IN JEWISH EMIGRATION SITUATION, AND THAT SEVERAL ARE BEYOND THE GOR'S CONTROL;

--NEVERTHELESS, THERE ARE OTHER WHICH ARE WITHIN THE GOR'S CONTROL, AND HE WOULD URGE THEM TO DO WHAT THEY CAN TO ENSURE A MODEST INCREASE IN JEWISH EMIGRATION FIGURES BY THE TIME REVIEW COMES UP AGAIN IN THE CONGRESS. THE KIND OF DECLINE NOW IN PROSPECT, FROM 2000 IN 1976 TO SOMETHING LIKE 1300 IN 1977 IS SIMPLY NOT

ACCEPTABLE.

6. COMMENT. SOLARZ DID NOT DEFINE SIZE OF "MODEST INCREASE"
HE HAD IN MIND. ROMANIAN OFFICIALS LISTENED CAREFULLY AND
DID NOT ROLL OUT EXTENSIVE COUNTER-ARGUMENTS. WE ARE INCLINED
TO ATTRIBUTE THIS RETICENCE PARTLY TO NATURAL POLITENESS, PARTLY
TO FACT THAT CONGRESSMAN WAS CONVINCING AS FRIEND OF ROMANIA.
ON THE OTHER HAND, ROMANIANS ALSO OFFERED NO ENCOURAGEMENT THAT AN
INCREASE IN JEWISH EMIGRATION FIGURES IS WITHIN POWER OF GOR
TO ENGINEER.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: CODELS, NEGOTIATIONS, DIPLOMATIC DISCUSSIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
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Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977BUCHAR08511
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770433-0651
Format: TEL
From: BUCHAREST
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19771136/aaaabeoi.tel
Line Count: 126
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 144b3e15-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION H
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 77 BUCHAREST 8485
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 09-Mar-2005 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 511240
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: CODEL SOLARZ DISCUSSIONS ON JEWISH COMMUNITY, EMIGRATION AND MFN
TAGS: CVIS, SHUM, RO, IS, US
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/144b3e15-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009